

Making Language Understandable

The Important Role of Comprehensible Input

Think-Pair-Share # 1

- ▶ Why is it important to stay in the target language at least 90% of class time?

Think-Pair-Share # 2

- ▶ Is it enough that the teacher speaks the target language at least 90% of the time in class?

Input is to language acquisition what gas is to a car. An engine needs gas to run; without gas the car would not move an inch. Likewise, comprehensible input in language learning is what gets the “engine” of acquisition going. Without it, acquisition simply does not happen.

Lee & VanPatten, 2003

Extending the analogy

borrowed from Donato & Smith
STARTALK Conference, May 2011

- ▶ Not all gas is good for your car. Refined gas is better than crude oil.
- ▶ Not all input is good for language learning.
- ▶ Beneficial input in language learning is a kind of “refined” language--modified and simplified to make it comprehensible to language learners

Sharing the wealth

Creating Comprehensible Language

- ▶ Paraphrasing or saying it in an easier way
- ▶ Slowing down the rate of delivery
- ▶ Defining words by example, not translation
- ▶ Using structures students are familiar with and building on them over time
- ▶ Using key words and phrases in a re-entered and re-cycled way
- ▶ Using tone of voice to emphasize key parts of the message

Donato and Smith, 2011

Reflecting on this . . .

What one (1) new strategy for making my input more comprehensible will I commit to use this school year?

Why have I selected this particular strategy?

How will I go about implementing this strategy?